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FM AMEMBASSY MINSK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0242
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHSK/AMEMBASSY MINSK 0246

UNCLAS MINSK 000137

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

TREASURY FOR OFAC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [CASC](#) [ETRD](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: BELARUS: REGIME VIEWS ON POSITIVE POLITICAL CHANGES, OTHER
ISSUES

REF: A) MINSK 132, B) MINSK 133, C) MINSK 091, D) MINSK 115

¶1. (SBU) Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Valentin Rybakov met with Charge April 29 at the request of Presidential Administration head Vladimir Makey (Rybakov confirmed that rumors that Makey was still recovering from an illness). Charge inquired about statements made by Lukashenka in his annual address (ref A) suggesting that there would be no more political "liberalization." Confirming sentiments shared April 8 with Charge by Makey, Rybakov was adamant that positive, political steps "responding to U.S. and EU concerns" would continue to be made, and cited the peaceful conduct at the April 26 Chernobyl protest (ref B) as proof. Rybakov did not offer what other specific steps might be taken, or what the timeline might be. He suggested that Lukashenka's remarks were candid thoughts which reflected frustration with the opposition, and in particular with demands for radical changes.

¶2. (SBU) Charge also inquired about the case of AMCIT Emanuel Zeltser (ref C), in custody since March 2008 and in very poor health, whose release the USG is seeking on humanitarian grounds. Rybakov asserted only that Zeltser will be released, but offered no time line for that step despite being pressed repeatedly. Rybakov made no offers or requests in connection with the Zeltser case. (Comment: Post's consular officer is scheduled to visit Zeltser April 30. End comment.)

¶3. (SBU) Rybakov asked about the problems the Belarusian Steel Works (BMZ) are having with the American Petroleum Institute (API), which has ended a commercial agreement ostensibly due to USG sanctions (ref D). Charge pointed out that BMZ has not been cited by the USG as subject to sanctions, and encouraged the Belarusian Charge in Washington and/or BMZ to pursue a dialogue with API. Rybakov acknowledged that API is a private institution, and that the USG has no role in its work, but expressed frustration that the matter remained unresolved.

MOORE